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Summary of the "Survey of Testing Activities in CIA"

From May through October, 1951, Educational Testing Service, *(Princeton, N.J.)* conducted, at the request of the Director of Training, a survey of the testing activities in the following offices of the Central Intelligence Agency:

- Testing Branch, Personnel Office
- Foreign Documents Division
- Medical Office
- Office of Communications
- Assessment and Evaluation Branch, TRC
- Office of Training

The report described the objectives of the testing in each office studied, as well as the various tests used, the methods of administration, and the reporting and use of test scores.

The following findings and recommendations were stated in the report:

(1) Most CIA offices had a healthy awareness of both the uses and limitations of psychological tests for CIA purposes, so the real need was for improvement rather than radical change.

(2) There was evident a need for more adequate coordination and central professional supervision of CIA testing activities. The appointment of a well qualified psychologist on a high administrative level was suggested to ameliorate that situation.

(3) No validity studies had been carried on to determine the degree of success with which tests predicted job performance. The recommendation was a series of research projects to set up expectancy charts or tables so that the predictive value of various tests used by CIA might be accurately established.

(4) No tests were available for some employment situations within the Agency, and for other situations the tests used were quite inadequate. Development of new tests, either by CIA staff members or under contract with outside psychologists, was strongly urged.

(5) There was evidenced a need for more adequate and reliable measures of the effectiveness of job performance. Evaluation of job performance was recommended, possibly with the use of performance checks and proficiency measures as well as systematic rating procedures.

(6) It appeared to the survey group unlikely that the actual or potential needs for selection and placement testing in the Agency were being met by the testing activities then in operation. It was therefore recommended that CIA explore the question of how personnel procedures might be improved by the further introduction and application of scientific testing procedures.

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Specific weak points noted in the various testing programs in the Agency were as follows:

Testing Branch, Personnel Office

Two tests of the Clerical Battery were considered totally inapplicable to the selection of clerical personnel. Both were dropped following the survey, however.

In some cases tests with time limits worked hardships on older people than those for whom they were especially designed.

A series of Differential Aptitude Tests, intended for use in differential prediction or indications of better performance in some areas than in others, was being misused in that applicants were being accepted by some placement officers only if they were above average in every aptitude tested.

In a number of cases placement officers were in ignorance as to proper interpretation and use of test scores.

A number of tests in the Professional Battery had not been sufficiently validated.

Test results were often used as criteria for promotion, to the exclusion of demonstrated job performance.

Foreign Documents Division

There is a great need for tests of knowledge of the area of the world with which an applicant might be concerned in his work---knowledge of its geography, economy, people, and their ways of thinking and reacting.

FDD also needs tests of an applicant's ability to fit into the group with which he will be working.

Some of the translation tests, while good, did not go far enough. More objective short answer translation tests would be helpful.

Medical Office

The one testing activity of this office, a study set up to determine emotional stability, suffered from lack of direction by a trained psychologist. This pointed up the need for a high level qualified psychologist to integrate the testing programs of the entire agency.

Office of Communications

There was a great need for a test to select cryptographers.

It was suggested that a practical performance test of radio technical information might be a useful supplement to the paper and pencil test in use.

Assessment and Evaluation Branch, TRC

The problem of achieving objectivity in scoring of reactions to the situation tests was emphasized.

There seemed to have been no studies of the applicability of the situation tests in prediction of future job success. Follow-up validation studies were needed.

Because assessment is quite expensive, it seemed desirable to recommend initiation of processes to determine the general worth of the program.

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Office of Training

Although it was admirable that some of the tests were designed for use in personal guidance of employees, there seemed little chance of achievement of that goal in its fullest sense. The psychological staff was too small to devote much time to such activities.

One objective of the Office of Training testing, the securing of information for preparation of psychological characteristic reports on individuals, seemed vague in that psychological descriptions might be ill-used by supervisors unless the descriptions had been drawn up with specific purposes in mind---i.e., placement, promotion, etc.

The reading comprehension tests in use were regarded as of very mediocre quality.

Here as in some other offices using testing programs, there is need for validation of the scores by job performance studies.